

Mr. Speaker, we commemorate Earth Day at a time when American soldiers are in Iraq, in part as a consequence of our energy dependence. No matter what the press releases say, the way this Congress is commemorating Earth Day is by recycling the energy bill.

It is replete with massive subsidies that will continue to tie us to the past. Rather than the development of true energy independence gained by working with renewables and a massive effort at energy conservation, this energy bill is a monument to Congress's inability to think comprehensively about the future. Our energy dependence and wasteful policies mean that we are desperately dependent on a volatile Middle East, especially Iraq and Saudi Arabia, as we spend a major portion of our defense budget protecting the stability in that oil-rich region.

The Pentagon is also the largest single consumer of fuel in the United States, almost 2 percent of the country's total transportation fuel. And much of this fuel use is due to highly inefficient vehicles, from an Abrams tank, weighing 68 tons, that gets only about half a mile to a gallon, to an aircraft carrier that gets 17 feet to a gallon.

The United States military now uses 1.7 million gallons of fuel a day in Iraq. The cost of this fuel can be up to \$400 a gallon depending on how it is delivered. Our military itself is clearly held hostage by the philosophy that energy efficiency does not matter. As the lines of supply are dangerously stretched with more points of vulnerability, while the flexibility and nimbleness of our troops are compromised by having to have huge amounts of gasoline close at hand. Lighter, more energy efficient vehicles are harder targets for the enemy to strike, and they can move greater distances between refueling and do not need this long chain of supply with more points of vulnerability for the vehicles and for our soldiers.

The situation the military faces in Iraq and other potential trouble spots demands action on an ambitious energy policy with a significant commitment to fuel conservation and renewable technologies, if only for the sake of the security of our Nation and the safety of our troops.

The skyrocketing gas prices this spring further demonstrates that we are hostage to an inadequate energy infrastructure with constrained refining capacity. The energy bill contains almost no incentives for change, as all those currently in control profit by this restricted supply, vulnerability, and volatility. As gasoline prices have increased 50 cents a gallon in a matter of weeks, every tank of gasoline is a reminder that the Republican leadership in Congress for 10 years has refused to significantly increase fuel efficiency standards, which would have meant significant money in the pocket of every American family.

The inability or unwillingness to establish a predictable window for wind energy development, by making the production tax credit permanent means that tens of thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in new investment are delayed, with the advances in technology and additional elements of supply are denied to the public. This is ironic, when our military is touting the contribution that wind energy is making to the security and efficiency of operations at Guantanamo.

The energy bill continues to spend too much for the wrong people to do the wrong things and shortchanging the technologies and strategies that ultimately will make a difference for the future. There is no question that America in this century will rely much more heavily on renewables and conservation. The sad note is that we are slipping behind the Chinese, who are increasing their cars' fuel efficiency standards, and further behind the European and Japanese, who are already racing ahead of us in energy efficiency.

Even in a defense-dominated, security-obsessed environment that this Congress operates in, we cannot make energy investments that will at least enhance our military to make the military and America's families more secure. We can and should do better.